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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2805
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 5510
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6631
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3257
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4782
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2428
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3679
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000906

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: CONTROVERSIAL ARMY GENERAL COULD BE PROMOTED

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires, a.i., Jeffrey A. Moon. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Based on media reports that Nepal Army (NA) Major General Toran Singh, who is alleged to be complicit in human rights abuses, was soon to be promoted to Lieutenant General, the Defense Attache met with two cabinet ministers and the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) to voice U.S. concerns about Singh's promotion. The Federal Minister committed to communicate U.S. concerns to Prime Minister M.K. Nepal and Nepali Congress party leader G.P. Koirala. The Energy Minister and the COAS were reluctant to take any action to prevent Singh's promotion without more concrete evidence of human rights abuses. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On 1 October 2009, Nepali media reports suggested that the GON was preparing to promote Major General Toran Singh to Lieutenant General. Maj Gen Singh was the No. 10 Brigade Commander of the Nepal Army when one of his subordinate battalions, the Bhairavnath Battalion, allegedly detained, tortured, and "disappeared" up to forty-nine Maoists in 2003. No one has been held accountable for this alleged incident.

¶3. (C) The Defense Attache (DATT), after coordinating with the Charge, approached two cabinet ministers who are active members of the embassy-sponsored, civilian-military Core Group on Security Sector Reform to register U.S. concerns about the possible impact of Singh's promotion. The DATT first met with Minendra Rizal, who is the Federal Minister and a member of the Nepali Congress Party. The DATT explained to Rizal that the U.S. values its relationship with the NA and desires to increase its engagement with the Nepal Army, but promoting MG Singh could have negative consequences for U.S.-sponsored training and engagement with the Nepal Army (NA).

¶4. (C) Rizal said he was aware that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal opposed the promotion and had made its position clear to the GON. Rizal told the DATT candidly that the GON did not take the OHCHR -- or other UN agencies in Nepal -- seriously because they are perceived to be overly sympathetic to the Maoists. Rizal said, however, that the concerns of the U.S. carry much more weight than the UN and that he would convey these concerns to Prime Minister Nepal and Girija Koirala, the head of the Nepali Congress Party. Rizal said that convincing the Prime Minister would be easy, but persuading Koirala might be more difficult.

¶5. (C) Later the same afternoon, the DATT called on Minister for Energy, Mr. Prakash Mahat, at his residence to convey the same message. Mahat, also a member of the Core Group on Security Sector Reform, was less receptive and seemed to be more concerned about defending the cabinets' plan to promote Singh, stating that Singh had already been promoted once since the alleged incidents. Mahat said there was no concrete evidence of abuse and that a committee comprised of three Secretary-level officials was recently formed to investigate the allegations against Singh. The committee reportedly found no credible evidence that Toran Singh was involved in past human rights abuses. Mahat said he understood U.S. concerns and the possibility of negative consequences to future engagement with the NA.

¶6. (C) On the morning of 2 October 2009, the DATT made an unofficial call on the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Gurung, at his official residence to discuss the matter. Gurung said the matter was out of his hands. His predecessor General Katawal forwarded the recommendation to the Ministry of Defense and the promotion was now up to the cabinet. Gurung said he personally felt that Singh is being unfairly singled out because there are accusations but no evidence. That fact that he was cleared once for promotion to Major General set a precedent that should not be violated, Gurung said. The COAS said he believes there is a small group of human rights activists, including certain UN officials, who want to punish Singh even if there is no concrete evidence tying him to specific human rights abuses.

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Gurung said he would make available all documentation in the NA's possession clearing Singh of human rights violations, and suggested the DATT try to obtain the report from the Secretary-level committee that recently investigated Singh and provided its recommendations to the Cabinet Ministers.

¶7. (C) Comment: All three officials understand U.S. concerns and the possible negative consequences for U.S.-Nepal relations of Toran Singh's promotion. The DATT emphasized to all three individuals that there is significant interest in both the U.S. Executive Branch and the Congress in Nepal human rights developments. Rizal, who is a pro-American, up-and-coming leader of the NC, stated that he would communicate U.S. concerns to the Prime Minister and G.P. Koirala. Mahat and the COAS were hesitant to follow up without clear evidence implicating Toran Singh. As of 17:00 Friday, October 2, Post does not believe the Cabinet has made a final decision on Singh's promotion. The Charge d'Affaires will attend separate NC and UML party events during the weekend of October 3-4, and will further underscore our concerns in conversations with top party leaders. End Comment.

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